

**Friendship Heights
Transportation Management District
Advisory Committee
May 11, 2010**

Voting Members Present

Joe Dixon	GEICO
William P. Farley (Vice-Chair)	Town of Somerset
Kerri Gates	The JBG Companies
Tiffany Gee	Chevy Chase Land Company
David Glass	Chevy Chase Village Board of Managers
Leonard Grant	Friendship Heights Village Council
Bill McCloskey	Citizens Coordinating Committee on Friendship Heights
Robert Schwarzbart (Chair)	Friendship Heights Village Council

Non-Voting Members Present

Sandra L. Brecher	DOT/Transit Services Division-Commuter Services
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TMD Staff Present

Nakengi Byrd	DOT/Transit Services Division-Commuter Services
Jim Carlson	DOT/Transit Services Division-Commuter Services

Absent

Marc Esposito	Bloomingdale's
Chief Roy Gordon	Chevy Chase Village Police
Capt. Russell Hamill	Montgomery County Police
Kenneth Hartman	B-CC Services Center
Christine McGrew	M-NCPPC
Sheila Wilson	DOT/Transit Services Division-Commuter Services

Guests

April Birnbaum	Lerch, Early & Brewer
Robert Cope	Grove Jaskiewicz & Cobert (Past Chair)
Andrew Isaac	Legislative Director, Office of Del. Susan Lee
Bob Joiner	The Agenda News
Ann Lewis	Friendship Heights Village
Julian Mansfield	Friendship Heights Village

Abbreviations used herein include:

CCLC = Chevy Chase Land Company

MDOT = Maryland Dept. of Transportation

SHA = State Highway Administration

WMATA = Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority

Item 1&2-Introductions/Minutes Approval: Members and guest introduced themselves and minutes were approved without changes. Certificates of Appreciation were presented to departing committee members **Christine Norris** and **David Torchinsky**.

Item 3-Chair Comments: Chair **Robert Schwarzbart** welcomed **Andrew Isaac**, Legislative Director from State delegate **Susan Lee**'s office and **Ann Lewis**, who may succeed **Leonard Grant** as Friendship Heights Village Representative. **Ms. Lewis** was the White House Communications Director from 1997 until 2000, serving under **President Bill Clinton**.

Mr. Schwarzbart announced the resignation of **Marc Esposito** from the Advisory Committee due to a job related transfer. With the recent resignations of **Christine Norris**, **David Torchinsky** and **Mallory Starr**, membership problems of the TMD are compounded. There have been discussions with area businesses and the Bethesda-Chevy Chase Chamber (the nominating body for Large and Small Business Representatives) to fill vacated positions as soon as possible. The possibilities include representatives from Microsoft, Giant, Whole Foods and EagleBank.

Item 4-Discussion/Q&A: **Mr. Schwarzbart** introduced **Andrew Isaac**, who has been Legislative Director for State Delegate **Susan Lee** since 2008. His duties include writing and passing legislation and meeting with lobbyists and constituent groups in District 16.

Mr. Isaac explained that **Del. Lee** could not attend the meeting because of an Asian Pacific Legislative Conference. **Mr. Isaac** said that for 12 years **Del. Bill Bronrott** was a champion for State transit issues. **Mr. Bronrott** has since left the State post to serve in the **Obama** administration. **Ms. Lee** will do her best to continue the high standard that he set.

Mr. Isaac reported that **Ms. Lee** wanted to use today's meeting as an opportunity to hear any transportation concerns affecting Friendship Heights and to assist in meeting these concerns at the State level.

Mr. Schwarzbart said he was concerned about bus service eliminations reported by **Deanna Archey** from Ride On (at April's meeting), specifically the Route 23 which services Sibley Hospital. He said he believes the weekend elimination will strand citizens unable to afford other modes of transportation, such as taxis. **Mr. Schwarzbart** said he understands that the County hands are tied with respect to the budget shortfall; he asked if there is something the State to do. **Mr. Isaac** said there have been issues like this in the past and he would see if Maryland Department of Transportation (MDOT) has any alternatives. **Len Grant** added that, even though **Ms. Archey** said the Metrobus D6 route services the Sibley area on weekends, it does not serve the Friendship Heights area and the bus stops far from the hospital. **David Glass** remarked that no one would be taking Metro for hospital emergencies, and hospital visitors may have to make the sacrifice to take Metro given the current economic crisis; government cannot afford the same level of service so bus service will have to be cut back.

William Farley asked why the State did not support Metro and decided to withhold Maryland's \$56 million funding share for Metro. He added that the Friendship Heights area is a major transportation hub for the District. He was concerned that the withheld funds would make more commuters drive into the area, causing major congestion if Metrobus service is cut. **Sande Brecher** explained that **Peter Benjamin**, Chair of the Metro Board, said that originally the State of Maryland believed it could delay making payments to Metro because of Metro's fund reserves; however, the State reversed the decision and approved the funding.

Mr. Schwarzbart discussed his concerns about a number of potholes that appeared after the winter snow storms which can cause dangerous driving conditions. **Mr. Isaac** said last winter snow storms severely affected area roadways to a degree of which the government was not fully prepared. However, he said, the reason why some potholes are not repaired, he believes, is because they have not been reported to the appropriate agency. The State does have money available for road repairs but communication is more of

an issue in this instance than available funding. **Mr. Schwarzbart** said the situation is more acute than a communication issue, and he is not seeing much of an effort in road repairs. He is concerned that if repairs are not made soon, then next winter will worsen the already damaged roads, especially since Friendship Heights is a heavily congested area. **Mr. Isaac** agreed and said he will discuss expediting road repairs with **Delegate Lee**, perhaps using allotted funds for road repair to target more damaged areas.

Jim Carlson asked if there was a formula adjustment made in how money is allocated between counties to adjust for lost revenue in the current State and local budgets. **Mr. Isaac** is not sure; however there are blue ribbon study commissions looking at pensions and transit issues to figure out how to more efficiently allocate money.

Mr. Isaac said the State's FY11 budget is looking somewhat better than FY10 due to an additional \$300 million spending reduction while not significantly raising taxes. The State will be looking at paying pension obligations spent during the recession. There will be future spending reductions, but the fiscal outlook is not quite as dire. **Ms. Brecher** said that the County's FY11 budget outlook is the opposite of the State's, in that it is looking worse.

Mr. Glass asked if the Purple Line project will actually be built given the \$750 million needed from Maryland. **Mr. Isaac** said that currently the State is not able to commit the full amount; however, the project may be partially funded to produce an adapted form of the Purple Line. Just like the Baltimore Purple Line, the State funds, though committed, will not be fully provided. However, the State will provide funding for a revised version.

Mr. Schwarzbart expressed his continuing concerns about Metro safety and the general lack of accountability and enforcement by the Tri-State Oversight Committee which has representatives from the three funding jurisdictions, Maryland, Virginia and the District of Columbia. He asked **Mr. Isaac** if he saw any State legislation granting the Committee expanded oversight authority. **Mr. Isaac** said that although he can not speak for the General Assembly, he understands the safety concerns of this area and he does see the State looking into the Metro problem within the next couple of legislation sessions.

Mr. Glass said that one of the major issues with Metro is a general lack of accountability - also that it can't seem to retain a General Manager. He asked what role, if any, the State can play in stabilizing Metro. **Mr. Isaac** said he was not sure about the State's role other than perhaps withholding funds as leveraging power; he will look into it. **Mr. Schwarzbart** said Metro does need State intervention and will not make internal changes without political urging. Metro has shown that it is not fully accountable; for example, Metro failed to report a recent narrowly averted accident to the Tri-State Oversight Committee until after the reporting deadline had expired. **Mr. Isaac** said he would talk to **Ms. Lee** and work with DC, Virginia and the Maryland General Assembly to find a solution.

In response to **Mr. Carlson's** question about what committees **Ms. Lee** serves on, **Mr. Isaac** said she serves on the House Judiciary Committee and the Juvenile Law Subcommittee as Chair. She has in the Maryland Delegation since 2003; she is the senior member of the Delegation since **Del. Bill Bronrott's** departure in April. Legislative rules do not allow House seats to be vacant, so tomorrow the Central Committee will decide a temporary replacement for **Mr. Bronrott's** seat until November's election.

Mr. Isaac explained the role of **Mr. Bronrott's** replacement while the House is out of session, stating that he or she must agree not to run for the seat because it would give an unfair advantage over the other candidates. During the legislation off-session the replacement House Member attends to administrative and constituent work, and will attend some hearings.

Ms. Brecher gave an overview to **Mr. Isaac** of the role and mission of the Transportation Management Districts (TMDs) and the TMD Advisory Committees. The County's TMDs are the areas in Montgomery County with the highest employment and residential concentrations, which also tend to have the greatest traffic congestion; these include:

- Friendship Heights
- Downtown Silver Spring (the first TMD)
- Downtown Bethesda
- North Bethesda (Grovesnor, White Flint, Twinbrook and Rock Spring office park area)
- Shady Grove (created but not funded)

The mission of the TMD is to promote alternative modes of travel to work other than by a single occupancy vehicle to relieve traffic congestion and air quality concerns. The types of transit promoted are:

- Metrorail / Metrobus / Ride On
- Marc Trains
- Car and Vanpooling
- Biking and Walking
- Telework
- Carsharing

Mr. Schwarzbart added to **Ms. Brecher** comments, stating that pedestrian and vehicular safety are other concerns of the TMDs. The Advisory Committee has weighed in on a number of safety hazards along Friendship Boulevard, Wisconsin Avenue and Wisconsin Circle that were corrected, as were safety hazards at the Friendship Heights bus terminal.

The Friendship Heights bus terminal was saved from permanent closure by the Committee as well. The terminal was closed for ceiling reconstruction for about two years. During that period Metro started using a newer model of bus that had a utility component on the roof, making impossible for the buses to fit under the terminal when it reopened. Metro planned to close the terminal because it was not serving its function; however the Committee petitioned Metro through General Superintendent for Bus Operations, **Steve Petruccelli** (retired). As a result, and after a six-month engineering study, Metro was able to raise sections of the roof which allowed the newer buses access to the terminal.

Item 5-Pedestrian Safety Concerns: **Mr. Schwarzbart** discussed pedestrian safety hazards in the areas immediately adjacent to the Friendship Heights bus terminal:

- Large curb stone out of place at Wisconsin/Western
- Missing walkway bricks at bus station bike racks – Western Avenue side
- Missing bus bench with protruding posts – Western Avenue

Different jurisdictions are responsible for maintenance within the TMD, depending on location – DC Dept. of Transportation (DDOT), Maryland State Highway Administration (SHA) and Montgomery County DOT. **Tiffany Gee**, Chevy Chase Land Company (CCLC), researched and reported the following:

- Curb repairs are the responsibility of DC and SHA, not WMATA or CCLC
- Paving around the bike racks and missing bench - CCLC Property Manager **Leslie Olson** will make the repairs
- Paving inside WMATA pedestrian area /broken marble slab at bottom of escalator – WMATA will make repairs
- Crosswalk at Wisconsin Circle and Wisconsin Avenue – work order was placed to SHA

Problem areas still being researched are:

- Stamped paving walkway at the corner of Wisconsin Circle and Wisconsin Avenue
- Large hole that appears when it rains – CCLC not responsible but has been filling the hole with asphalt as needed

Ms. Gee explained that CCLC making repairs to the bus terminal entrance way roof sprinkler system which was damaged by a bus. **Mr. Carlson** said he was under the impression that deck repairs to both entrances were related to the sprinkler system repairs. Shut down for the repairs will start after the last bus run Sunday night, May 16th; construction repairs will run for three to four weeks. **Mr. Carlson** distributed information on bus stop changes during the repairs.

Mr. Schwarzbart asked if the repairs previously discussed could be done during the shut down and requested that orange safety cones be placed around hazardous areas in the meantime.

In reference to the curb stone repair which was discussed in April's minutes, **Mr. Glass** was concerned that because the stone is in the District SHA may not be able to do the repairs. **Mr. Carlson** said the response by SHA was that Wisconsin Avenue is primarily a State road; the situation will have to be resolved when SHA surveys the area.

Mr. McCloskey asked, in reference to a statement by **Mr. Carlson**, why SHA is waiting until July to do repairs to the curb stone if it is a safety issue. **Mr. Carlson** said it may have something to do with funding and he will try to have cones placed in the meantime. [safety cones were placed next to the curb stone until SHA can begin work]

Robert Cope reported that there were, until last week, several stretches of inoperative street lights in the vicinity of Wisconsin Place, making it hazardous to walk at night. The streets affected were Wisconsin Avenue, Willard Avenue and Western. Currently, all lights are now back on except for three along Western Avenue.

Item 6-Updates: **Ms. Brecher** said that the County Council's Transportation, Infrastructure, Energy & Environment Committee (T&E Committee) voted to retain all Ride On service in the FY11 budget that had been proposed for cuts; the service would remain in place until at least Labor Day. The County Executive came back with proposed 'surgical cuts' – service reductions of about two percent instead of the 5½ percent service cuts in the original recommendation. The final budget is expected to be adopted in May.

Council Staff has indicated that some of the proposed cuts would eliminate entire routes, either during a weekday or on weekends, and these are not the cuts Council will be recommending.

The T&E Committee does recommend going forward with the proposed changes to the Ride On holiday schedule, which includes Veteran's Day, Martin Luther King Day and President's Day. Metro is also considering reduced service on those days.

The T&E Committee has also recommended that the proposed fare increases go forward. Metro is also contemplating fare increases. The Committee also recommends suspending the Seniors Ride Free program; the Kids Ride Free program is also recommended for suspension.

Ms. Brecher recommended that members read the Council T&E Committee packet, available on the Council web site – link to Packets and Meeting Summaries on the left side menu list.

Mr. Carlson discussed his efforts in working with the Bethesda-Chevy Chase Chamber to nominate replacement members. As was discussed in the previous meeting, employers need not be members of the Chamber in order to be nominated to serve on the Committee. **Ms. Brecher** said this Committee is the only one in which members who are not actually Chamber representatives must be nominated by the Chamber; in the case of Silver Spring, for instance, there are two members who actually represent the Greater Silver Spring Chamber on the committee.

Mr. Carlson said Microsoft is promising as a Large Employer representative. Commuter Services staff has had an introductory meeting with the Senior Operations Manager, who may be interested in serving on the Committee. Microsoft has more than 500 employees.

Mr. Carlson announced that Bike To Work Day will be May 21st. Bike To Work is a regional effort to promote bicycle use. Funding for the event is from Washington Council of Governments; and the Washington Area Bicyclists Association (WABA) also plays a leading role in planning and staging the event.

Mr. Carlson also announced that Commuter Services will be hosting a 'Live Near Your Work' event June 10th at the Executive Office Building in Rockville. It will be a morning event – 8:30 to 11:30 – with panel discussions and presentations from employers promoting Live Near Your Work and telework programs for employees. About 75-100 employers in Montgomery County are expected to attend. The event is funded through a Council of Governments grant.

Meeting adjourned at 10:05 AM

Next meeting date: June 8, 2010